

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information-processing apparatus comprising:  
storage means for storing application programs and  
data files;

calculating means for activating an application  
program stored in said storage means to carry out  
predetermined processing;

media drive means for recording and playing back  
information into and from an external recording medium;  
and

control means which controls said media-drive means  
and said storage means when said external recording  
medium for recording an application program is mounted on  
said media drive means so that: when said storage means  
includes a remaining free storage area with a size large  
enough for accommodating said application program  
recorded in said external recording medium, said  
application program recorded in said external recording  
medium is installed in said storage means; but when said  
storage means includes a remaining free storage area with  
a size not large enough for accommodating said  
application program recorded in said external recording  
medium, on the other hand, an application program or a  
data file stored in said storage means is saved to said

external recording medium in order to allocate a free storage area in said storage means and then said application program recorded in said external recording medium is installed in said storage means.

2. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said information-processing apparatus further has an activation-history management means for storing activation history information for each application program on said storage means and for updating said activation history information for a specific application program upon activation of said specific application program by said calculating means, and said control means selects an application program to be saved to said external recording medium on the basis of said activation history information.

3. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said storage means is a non-volatile storage area.

4. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein, when an application program or a data file has been saved in said external recording medium being dismounted from said media drive means, said control means controls said media-drive means and said storage means to uninstall an application program

installed from said external recording medium into said storage means in order to restore said installed application program to said external recording medium and to restore said application program or said data file saved in said external recording medium to said storage means.

5. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said calculating means activates an application program upon installation of said application program from said external recording medium into said storage means.

6. An information-processing method comprising:  
a judgment step of verifying the size of a free storage area available in storage means and the size of a storage area required for accommodating an application program loaded from an external recording medium into said storage means and forming a judgment as to whether or not said application program can be installed in said storage means;

a save step of saving an application program or a data file stored in said storage means to said external recording medium in order to allocate a new free storage area in said storage means in the case of outcome of said judgment step indicating that said application program

cannot be installed in said storage means; and

an installation step of installing said application program recorded in said external recording medium into said storage means having said new free storage area allocated by said save step.

7. An information-processing method according to claim 6, wherein said information-processing method further having an activation step of activating an application program upon installation of said application program from said external recording medium into said storage means by said installation step.

8. An information-processing method according to claim 6, wherein said information-processing method further has a history-updating step of updating activation history information for an application program upon activation of said application program, and an application program to be saved to said external recording medium is selected, in said save step, on the basis of said activation history information.

9. An information-processing method according to claim 6, wherein, when said application program or said data file has been saved in said external recording medium being dismounted, said information-processing method further having a restoration step of uninstalling

an application program installed from said external recording medium into said storage means to restore said installed application program to said external recording medium and restoring an application program or a data file saved in said external recording medium to said storage means.

10. An information-processing apparatus comprising:

storage means;

connection means for exchanging information between said information-processing apparatus and an external recording medium;

calculating means for activating application software and carrying out processing based on said application software; and

search means for first searching said storage means for a relevant data file to be used by said activated application software, and for searching said external recording medium for said relevant data file through said connection means when said data file is not found in said storage means.

11. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 10 wherein said external recording medium is a portable recording medium, and said connection means is

implemented as a recording and playback unit for recording and playing back data onto and from said portable recording medium.

12. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 10 wherein said external recording medium is an external server connected to said information-processing apparatus by a wire or radio communication line, and said connection means is implemented as a communication unit for communicating with said external server through said communication line.

13. An information-processing method adopted by a calculating means operating in accordance with a predetermined step to search for a desired file related to processing of said predetermined step, said information-processing method comprising:

a search step of searching storage means for said desired file;

a connection step of setting a connection to an external recording medium through connection means when said desired file is not found in said storage means;

a search step of searching said external recording medium for said desired file after said connection step is set.

14. An information-processing method according to

claim 13, wherein said external recording medium searched for said desired file, when said desired file is not found in said storage means, is a portable recording medium, and said connection means allowing information to be input from and output to said external recording medium is a recording/playback unit for recording and playing back data into and from said portable recording medium.

15. An information-processing method according to claim 13, wherein said external recording medium searched for said desired file, when said desired file is not found in said storage means, is an external server connected by a wire or radio communication line, and said connection means allowing information to be input from and output to said external recording medium is a communication unit for carrying out communications with said external recording medium through said communication line.

16. An information-processing apparatus comprising:

storage means for storing application software and data files;

connection means for exchanging information between said information-processing apparatus and an

external recording medium for storing application software and data files;

recognition means for recognizing application software or data files, which are stored in said external recording medium connected to said information-processing apparatus by said connection means;

user interface means for displaying application software or data files, which are stored in said storage means, displaying application software or data files, which are stored in said external recording medium and recognized by said recognition means, and for allowing a piece of said displayed application software to be selected for activation and for allowing one of said displayed data files to be selected for use; and

activation processing control means for loading application software from said external recording medium into said storage means and carrying out processing to activate said loaded application software in response to an operation carried out on said user interface means to make a request for activation of said application software.

17. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said information-processing apparatus further having reference processing control



means for loading a data file from said external recording medium into said storage means and carrying out a process to reference said loaded data file in response to an operation carried out on said user interface means, or for loading a data file required in the course of processing based on application software in execution from said external recording medium into said storage means and carrying out a process to reference said loaded data file, when a request is made for reference of said data file.

18. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 16 wherein said external recording medium is a portable recording medium, and said connection means is implemented as a recording and playback unit for recording and playing back data onto and from said portable recording medium.

19. An information-processing apparatus according to claim 16 wherein said external recording medium is an external server connected by a wire or radio communication line, and said connection means is implemented as a communication unit for communicating with said external server through said communication line.

20. An information-processing method comprising:  
an activation-detecting step of detecting an

operation to activate application software;

a judgment step of forming a judgment as to whether application software to be activated which is detected by said activation-detecting step is stored in an storage means or an external recording medium;

a loading step of loading application software from said external recording medium in the case of result of said judgment step indicating that said application software is stored in said external recording medium; and

an activation step of activating application software loaded on said storage means by said loading step.

21. An information-processing method according to claim 20, wherein said information-processing method further having a data-file-referencing step of loading a data file from said external recording medium into said storage means and carrying out a process to reference said loaded data file in response to an operation carried out on said user interface means, or for loading a data file required in the course of processing based on application software in execution from said external recording medium into said storage means and carrying out a process to reference said loaded data file, when a request is made for reference of said data file.

22. An information-processing method according to claim 20 wherein said external recording medium is a portable recording medium, and application software is played back from said portable recording medium in said loading step.

23. An information-processing method according to claim 20 wherein said external recording medium is an external server connected by a wire or radio communication line, and application software is downloaded from said external server through said communication line in said loading step.